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Rob Leonard

Dr. Rob Leonard, director of the Graduate Program in Linguistics: Forensic Linguistics, is one of the world's leading experts in this growing field of study that is increasingly being used by legal professionals, law enforcement, and the intelligence community in the US and around the world.

Forensic linguistics involves taking any issue that deals with language and applying it to the law. 📺

Dr. Leonard is "one of the foremost language detectives in the country," says *The New Yorker* (http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Academics/Colleges/HCLAS/flp/flp_NewsDay_WordOnTrial.pdf) magazine

In addition to serving as director of the graduate program, Dr. Leonard is professor of linguistics and Swahili and co-director of the Institute for Forensic Linguistics, Threat Assessment and Strategic Analysis. He heads the innovative Forensic Linguistics Capital Case Innocence Project. Dr. Leonard, a Fulbright Fellow for his doctoral work at Columbia University, has consulted to the FBI and police, counter-terrorism, and intelligence agencies throughout the US, Canada and the UK, as well as many defense teams. Other clients include Apple, Inc., Facebook, the Prime Minister of Canada, and the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force. Dr. Leonard's testimony has been pivotal in investigating and prosecuting several high profile cases, including the JonBenet Ramsey murder, death threats to judges and US Congress members, and the triple homicide of the Coleman family in Illinois.

Hofstra University's **Master of Arts degree in Linguistics: Forensic Linguistics**

(http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/Colleges/HCLAS/FLP/flp_maflp.html) is the first program of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. Professor Robert Leonard is widely credited for growing and

promoting this field of study in the US and abroad.

In addition to heading **Hofstra's Forensic Linguistics Institute**

(<http://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/Colleges/HCLAS/FLP/index.html>) and Linguistics Programs,

Dr. Leonard teaches Swahili, the language of his doctoral dissertation research. A favorite among students, Dr. Leonard was voted by graduating seniors as **"Teacher of the Year"**

(http://www.hofstra.edu/Home/News/PressReleases/Archive/042109_TeachersoftheYear.html)

in Hofstra College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for 2008-09. He was chosen by the University to give the Distinguished Faculty Lecture in 2014.

In an interview, Dr. Leonard said, **"I think the most important thing you learn in forensic linguistics and in any liberal art is how to learn. You are introduced to a new field, a new set of variables and are able to combine that with your own information and own world view to solve problems."** 

***"It's a subject, and expertise, whose time has come," says Dr. Leonard of forensic linguistics
(Hofstra Magazine 2012)***

ROBERT LEONARD

Forensic Linguistics in NYPD Blue

NYPD Blue taught us a new language, reach out to old friends and NYPD Blue teaches us much more. Linguist Leonard explains, NYPD's complex world of legal language. The in the courtroom and in the law.





Dr. Robert Leonard in the News

- Solved Wife's Murder (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acHg0L5ky30>)
Investigation Discovery
- Dr. Rob Leonard – Forensic Linguistics Figured Out J.K. Rowling's Pseudonym
(<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-did-computers-uncover-jk-rowlings-pseudonym-180949824/>) March 2014 - Smithsonian Magazine
- Why Do We Curse? (<http://news.discovery.com/history/swear-words-have-a-long-history-130910.htm>)
September 11, 2013 – Discovery-News
- Words on Trial: Can Linguists Solve Crimes that Stump the Police?
(http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Academics/Colleges/HCLAS/flp/flp_NewsDay_WordOnTrial.pdf)
July 23, 2012 - *The New Yorker*
- Reading Between the Lines
(http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/academics/ce/professionaldevelopment/forensicstudies/ce_le)
Magazine 2012
- A Graduate of Sha Na Na, Now a Linguistics Professor
(<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/15/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/15colli.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%7B%22%22%3A%22RI%3A14%22%7D&>)

15, 2008 – The New York Times

- **Sha Na Na Founder Helps Hunts Criminals**
(http://www.today.com/id/12632005/ns/today-today_entertainment/t/sha-na-na-founder-helps-hunt-criminals/#.U8lYXPldXT0) May 10, 2006 – Associated Press
- **Dude, You Are So (Not Obama)**
(<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/fashion/23slang.html?scp=1&sq=robert%20leonard%20hofstra&st=cse>) Sept. 29, 2005 - USA Today
- **'Connotation is no longer in a vacuum'**
(http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/al/2005-09-29-word-connotation_x.htm) April 28, 2005 - Newsday
- **He Knows the Meaning of Be-Bop-a-Lula**
(<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D00E6DB163FF934A15750C0A9639C8B63>) March 27, 2005 - The New York Times

Dr. Leonard has served as a forensic linguist consultant for an array of popular media, and in many different forms. He collaborated with author Kathy Reichs, forensic anthropologist and producer of the TV series *Bones* (based on her life) to create a forensic linguistics plotline and create a character, Rob Potter, (based on Dr. Leonard himself) in her bestseller *Bones to Ashes*. (It reached #3 on *The New York Times* hardcover fiction list.) He has advised the TV show *Elementary* and many other writers devising forensic linguistics cases and solutions in their

Dr. Leonard has been called on to train counterintelligence agents from Quantico to Disneyland to London, and he has consulted on some well-known cases:

- He analyzed **arson threat letters sent to actors Taye Diggs and Idina Menzel**
(<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,911452,00.html>)
- He prepared testimony to bolster the FBI expert in the **Melanie McGuire “suitcase” murder**
(<http://murderpedia.org/female.M/m/mcguire-melanie.htm>) trial.
- He consulted in the **Brian Hummert** trial, analyzing letters sent to authorities following the murder of Hummert’s wife, Charlene. He testified in both of Hummert’s trials. As *The New York Times* wrote, “His consultation on the murder of Charlene Hummert ... helped put her killer in prison.”
- He prepared testimony against FBI interrogators in the **Alvarez spy case**
(<http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/12/19/professor.spy/>).
- In the much publicized confession of **John Karr to the murder of JonBenet Ramsey**
(<http://abcnews.go.com/US/LegalCenter/story?id=2589251&page=1>), Dr. Leonard found no evidence of links between Karr’s writing to the note found at the scene of the murder years before. Dr. Leonard’s findings presaged those of the DNA tests which also ruled Karr out as a suspect.

Dr. Leonard's students have some remarkable opportunities to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real world situations. They work with him on cases through Hofstra University's Institute for Forensic Linguistics, Threat Assessment and Strategic Analysis. Internships are also possible with government agencies, think tanks and law offices, and now with the unique Forensic Linguistics Capital Case Innocence Project. 📺

In addition to being a leading expert in forensic linguistics, Dr. Leonard has also received much attention for having been a rock star in the 60s and 70s as a founding member of the group Sha Na Na. He opened for Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock (**watch the YouTube video of him performing "Teen Angel" at Woodstock in 1969!**) and played with Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead, Santana and John Lennon. Then, as *The New York Times* reported, "At age 21, Mr. Leonard walked away from rock fame to pursue his real love: linguistics. Turns out to have been an inspired choice."

Dr. Leonard left the music business for a Fulbright Fellowship and a PhD from Columbia University. Rock 'n' roll actually ignited his interest in forensic linguistics: analyzing his group's recording contract, he realized they were not receiving money due them. He quipped to the online magazine *Slate*, "I am one of very few people in the world – actually, I'm pretty sure I'm the only one – who has worked with *both* the FBI and The Grateful Dead." And he's probably the only Fulbright Fellow to have played Woodstock.

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07:30 AM

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 07, 2016

Hofstra Summer Camp 2016 Open House (<http://events.hofstra.edu/?eID=16822>)

[| more events | \(http://events.hofstra.edu\)](http://events.hofstra.edu)

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